



For Immediate Release
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***One Square in Avon's Heritage Quilt History-
The Derrin Family of West Avon***

Lecture: "The Woodford vs. Derrin Farms"

Exhibit: "Early Avon Clothing Production Mills"

Saturday, November 7 at 1:00pm at the Local History Room, Avon Free Public Library

The next event in a multi-part lecture series organized by the Special Projects Committee of the Avon Historical Society is entitled "The Woodford vs. Derrin Farms." It will be presented by Janet Carville on Saturday, November 7 at 1:00pm inside the Marian Hunter History Room of the Avon Free Public Library. Attendees can also view a new exhibit outside the History Room entitled "Early Avon Clothing Production Mills."

Mrs. Janet Carville, owner of the 'Pickin Patch' farm in Avon, is related to Joseph Woodford, descendent of Thomas Woodford who arrived in Hartford with Thomas Hooker's expedition. Joseph started their family farm in 1666, almost 350 years ago, as a regular family farm. Carville will explain its' transformation from dairy farm to tobacco farm to today's 'pick your own produce' farm in comparison to the Derrin families small, subsistence farms in West Avon. Over a century ago, Woodford Farm milk would be delivered via horse drawn carriages over Talcott Mountain to the City of Hartford on a regular basis. Carville, a lifelong resident, "Avon has always been my address" still rises at dawn as was the habit of folks living on a working farm.

A companion exhibit entitled "Early Avon Clothing Production and Mills" will explain the process of turning wool from raw material into finished cloth and hence, clothing in the early farming days of Avon. Many small farms in West Avon had a few sheep and the Derrin family had six sheep according to Agricultural census records. The production of linen was a labor-intensive process as well to turn flax fiber into finished cloth and will also be showcased. The exhibit will feature both an antique spinning wheel for yarn and a hatchel wheel for flax. The display will run from November 2nd through December 16th outside the Local History Room of the Library.

The horizontal glass display case will feature copies of Estate Will Inventories (with transcriptions) where the public can see the number of sheep listed for selected West Avon families and which families owned spinning wheels, hatchel wheels, and floor looms.

Since Avon was originally a part of Farmington, the *Clatter Ridge Farm*, which pastures its' sheep on Hillstead Museum's property, has graciously offered to loan woolen products made using wool from their farm's sheep for this exhibit. Items of clothing, a blanket, shawl, skeins of undyed wool and other items will be on display. There will also be photos showing the different sheep breeds and the type of wool each produces. Clatter Ridge sheep's wool is used for 'The Connecticut Blanket Project' as members of the Connecticut Sheep Breeders Association, Inc.

In addition, there will be information about the little known former milling community, Sleepy Hollow, which once existed where Avon Old Farms School is today. There used to be a carding mill to comb the fibers, a fulling mill to cleanse and 'thump' the wool, and a clothier's mill in town to finish the cloth for sewing. There will also be some articles of clothing and household items made from flax such as linen kitchen towels, an apron, and table napkins on display.

It took many people, a community effort, to produce clothing and other cloth articles in the early days...the farmer brought forth the natural fibers, and women of the house cleaned, combed, washed and dried the wool or had this work done by the mills. Then the yarn was returned and women often got together for 'spinning bees' to socialize while they spun. A true relic of Avon's past history!

This exhibit is a part of a multi-part lecture series "One Quilt in Avon's Heritage Quilt History" that sets the stage for understanding the lives of the town's early settlers, how Avon became a prosperous farming community, its growth and place in Connecticut's history. The Derrin family was just one of the 'squares of cloth' of families who settled in West Avon and contributed to this community's economic and residential success. Their story, starting with coming to Farmington/Northington in the mid-1700s, the building of three homesteads along West Avon Road (two extant) representative of typical town farms up until the mid-1800s, to their eventual further migration, parallels that of many of this town's early settler families that created the *heritage quilt* that is Avon today.

NOTE: The first lecture entitled "Early Settlers in Nod/Northington," scheduled for early September, was postponed and will be rescheduled. It will be presented by Lisa Johnson, Executive Director of the Stanley Whitman House museum in Farmington.

The remaining lectures will be:

- “Walls Do Talk - An Archaeological Dig at Derrin Farmhouse” on Saturday, December 5th, 2015 at 7:00 p.m. at the Avon Senior Center/Community Center, 635 West Avon Road, presented by Mr. Nicholas Bellantoni, retired State Archaeologist.
- “From Bedrock to Bedroom Community – The Evolution of Avon” on Saturday, March 5th, 2016 at 7:00 p.m. the Avon Senior Center/Community Center, 635 West Avon Road, presented by Robert M. Thorson, Professor of Geology at UCONN Storrs campus.
- “One Quilt Square in Avon’s Heritage Quilt” is the final lecture with speaker to be announced on Saturday, June 4th, 2016 at the Alsop Community Room of the Avon Free Public Library at 1:00 p.m. A companion exhibit entitled “A Heritage Quilt - The Derrins of West Avon” will be on display outside the Local History Room.

More details on the last three lectures will be available soon. They are sponsored in part by the Avon Senior Center/Community Center and the Avon-Canton Rotary Club. Residents of the Farmington Valley are invited to attend a grand event to commemorate the 250th anniversary of the deed signing of the Derrin land in Avon on Sunday, June 12, 2016 at the 1810 Derrin Farmhouse, 249 West Avon Road, Avon. Details on that event will be forthcoming.

***Avon Historical Society mission is to identify, collect, utilize, publish,
display, promote and preserve the history and heritage of Avon.***

www.avonhistoricalsociety.org

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